CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
26 September 1986

Crucial linkages to Daniloff

By Robert R. Bowie

THE Daniloff case raises once more the issue of linkage among various facets of relations with the Soviet Union.

Nicholas Daniloff's arrest on the charge of espionage is a blatant frame-up in retaliation for the arrest of Gennady Zakharov in New York for spying. In essence, Mr. Daniloff is an innocent hostage taken to provide the basis for a trade. And Mikhail Gorbachev has compounded the offense by virtually branding President Reagan a liar after his personal assurance that Daniloff was not a United States agent.

The choice of a correspondent as the victim may also be intended to deter other foreign newsmen from contacts with Soviet citizens and to restrain their zeal in seeking out and reporting information from non-official sources. Mr. Gorbachev's policy of "greater openness" means more official briefings and access, not less control of information and sources.

The Soviet effort to equate Daniloff and Mr. Zakharov should be rejected, as the administration seems to be doing. It should not agree to any direct exchange, and any package deal for Daniloff's release should avoid any implication of equivalence.

How should the United States respond? Specifically, should it suspend negotiations on arms control or refuse to hold any summit until Daniloff is released?

The holding of a summit while the Daniloff case remains unresolved is inappropriate.

Such negotiations are in various stages on a number of fronts:

- The Stockholm Conference has agreed on a set of military confidence-building measures.
- On intermediate-range missiles (INF), both sides have made some concessions, which bring them closer together, though many specifics remain unsettled.
- The Geneva negotiations on strategic weapons have resumed with modified proposals, which may offer bases for compromise. As Mr. Reagan said in his UN speech on Monday, he now recognizes the necessity for considering both "the offensive and defensive sides of the equation" and for cooperation between the two sides in moving toward greater reliance on strategic defense in order that neither side feels threatened.

But he still adheres to his vision of a population shield that would rid the world of the threat of nuclear weapons. His specific proposals, which would legitimize the deployment of strategic defense after a five-year period and negotiations for two years about "sharing the benefits of strategic defense and eliminating offensive ballistic missiles," will hardly appeal to the Soviets.

- Some constraints on nuclear testing may be attainable, if only under the Threshhold Treaty, although Reagan continues to reject any comprehensive ban.
- A proposal for a global ban on chemical weapons is on the table.
- The Vienna negotiations on conventional weapons (MBFR), going on for years, continues.

Bringing these several negotiations or some of them to successful conclusions will take patience and a readiness to compromise on both sides. How far the Soviet Union may be prepared to go on each topic can only be discovered by testing them with concrete proposals in the negotiations. But on many of the critical issues, the split between the Defense and State Departments will make it extremely difficult to develop and put forward realistic negotiating positions.

Yet there is an overriding interest in attempting to reach balanced agreements, especially with respect to nuclear weapons. For many years both sides have recognized that the risk of nuclear war is a common danger. In minimizing that risk and stabilizing and bolstering deterrence, suitable arms control agreements can make an important contribution.

That interest is so vital that its pursuit through arms control negotiations should not be made a hostage to other Soviet actions, even as reprehensible as the seizure of Daniloff.

For a democracy, that is bitter medicine — on occasion, too bitter to swallow. President Johnson, who was eager for arms control, suspended negotiations in 1968 when the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia (but they were resumed a year later). President Carter stopped the ratification of the SALT I Treaty upon the Soviet attack on Afghanistan. But while that aggression continues, Reagan, who denounced the treaty, has conformed to its terms for nearly six years — though planning to end that soon.

So far the President seems to be following the suggested course. That seems to me in our interest.

Does the same argument hold for going ahead with a summit without regard to Daniloff's release? I do not think so. The record of 11 summits since 1955 is mixed, but they can be useful for discussion of relations and sometimes for completing negotiations on critical points. But they are seldom really essential.

On balance, it seems to me that the holding of a summit while the Daniloff case remains unresolved is inappropriate and not justified by any sufficient benefit. The President could agree that necessary advance preparations could go ahead if both sides desire, but with the explicit condition that his attendance is contingent on the release of Daniloff.

Meanwhile, the US should be applying other forms of pressure on the USSR to hasten his release.

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